

Section B Soundness Matter 2 Spatial Strategy and Allocations

- 1 Cranborne Chase AONB Partnership questions the soundness of the Plan on the basis of the planned geographic areas of growth, the allocation of sites in relation to this Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and the difficulties of mitigating significant adverse impacts.
- 2 This AONB's principal concern is the allocated site at Blandford. In strategic terms the adopted North Dorset Local Plan indicates that new housing development at Blandford and Sturminster Newton growth centres will be in the order of 1595 houses, whereas the growth in the Gillingham/Shafesbury area would be much greater, in the order of 3340 houses. Gillingham is also well placed for access to the arterial A303 trunk road, which is due to be upgraded to an Expressway, for the transfer of waste to disposal sites. Blandford does not have such arterial routes close to it, and it would appear that the proposed strategy would lead to a significant movement of waste from the Gillingham area to Blandford which would entail additional HGV traffic crossing this Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. That situation has already been exacerbated by the County Highway Authority directing HGVs southward on a C class road in this AONB.
- 3 Dorset County Council is a member of the Cranborne Chase AONB Partnership and has adopted the AONB Management Plan 2014-2019. Objective PT D states

'Transportation planning and management takes account of the AONB designation, protects the tranquillity and special qualities of the landscape and reduces transport impacts on the environment and communities of the AONB'.

Policy PT21 specifically states

'Seek to minimise freight transport through the AONB to help protect tranquillity, the rural nature of settlements and the special qualities of the AONB'.

- 4 Alternative sites, outside of the AONB, do not appear to have been exhaustively investigated in areas to the north west and south east of Blandford, if it is felt that there is a compelling case for a combined household recycling centre and waste transfer centre in the vicinity of Blandford.
- 5 The allocated site at Blandford appears to neither safeguard nor enhance local amenity, landscape, or natural resources or environmental assets. The significant adverse impacts would be very difficult to mitigate.
- 6 The Dorset Waste Partnership kindly arranged for the AONB Team to visit their 'state of the art' household recycling centre and waste transfer facility at Bridport. It appears that a facility of that scale and similar design would be envisaged for the Blandford site.

- 7 There are, however, a number of key differences in relation to the two sites. At Bridport the site is on sloping land which facilitates the split level household recycling facility which then literally flows down the slope to the waste transfer facility. The slope also facilitates loading into the top of transfer vehicles which run at a lower level than the enclosed building. The Bridport site is also relatively close to a road but that road runs at a level higher than the buildings and therefore the perceived height of the buildings is reduced and hedge screening and additional tree planting does not have to be higher than the buildings from all angles.
- 8 In contrast the Blandford site is an open and elevated one, considerably exposed to the north east. The flat site means the buildings and two tier household recycling centre would be imposed above ground level and would need to be elevated to achieve the through flow of material. In contrast to the Bridport site which is only generally viewed by the travelling public from one side the Blandford site has roads on the western and southern sides.
- 9 Two of the access options would remove the existing overgrown hedgerows which would expose the site and structures to view. The creation of a new access from either the roundabout or from the A350 would further urbanise the AONB. The scale of the slip road required for the A350 access would remove the majority of the hedge screening the site from that side thereby exposing the site and the very substantial buildings, significantly larger than those on the adjacent Business Park. In one of the nation's finest landscapes it does not seem appropriate to have to wait a greater part of a decade for replacement hedge and tree planting to blur and screen large scale industrial buildings.